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ABSTRACT

Teachers can use the process writing format for many assignments to teach and refine more skills than are often incorporated in older methods, and this is exemplified by a teaching unit comparing two short stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Peer conferences and peer editing in the revision stages, which are features of the process model, can lead to higher student writing standards. Six stages comprise the unit: (1) the prompt--an assignment, in this case inviting the students to contribute a short story to a volume honoring Hawthorne; (2) prewriting, during which students review characteristics of Hawthorne's writing and freewrite using the characteristics as "story starters"; (3) drafting, during which the students use their ideas to draft a story outside of class; (4) revising, the stage during which students work in pairs and check each other's work for flow of ideas, setting, characterization, specificity, and exemplification; (5) editing, during which students pass their stories to peers who mark the work for sentence and punctuation errors; and (6) publishing, the final stage, during which students share stories with groups of five, each group votes for one story to read aloud to the class, and all final copies are turned in. Students become engrossed in the process, and the revision process enhances development, tone and style. (SKC)

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Process Writing with Hawthorne

"You want me to attend a process writing workshop? Oh, I don't know. Free writing, peer conferencing. . . . It all sounds a little too trendy for me, not my style!"

I went;

I wrote.

I returned.

They learned.

I learned, too. I discovered that I can utilize the process writing format for many assignments to teach and refine more skills than I have been incorporating into my staid, time-honored method. Implemented cautiously, the writing process motivates students to achieve the high standards I had feared would be neglected with peer conferencing in the editing and revision stages.

The transformation began as my cherished essay

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assignment comparing two Hawthorne short stories became a short story writing. We had read and discussed "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" and "The Minister's Black Veil." I speculated about the similarities between the two and the students responded readily. They began contributing ideas from THE SCARLET LETTER as well. The similarities translated nicely into characteristics typical of Hawthorne's writings. At this point I introduced the prompt.

Prompt:

A group of New England book publishers will publish a volume of short stories as a tribute to Nathaniel Hawthorne. You are invited to write a short story to be published in this volume. You are to write in the style Hawthorne might have used. You may use one of the ideas Hawthorne recorded in diary if you wish.

Prewriting:

Review the previously developed characteristics of Hawthorne's characteristics. Discuss how these characteristics might be developed using suggested "story starters," such as those from Hawthorne's diary. Students should select an idea and begin free writing during the class period.

Drafting:

Using the ideas developed through free writing, students should write the story outside class.

Revising:

Students work in groups of two for peer conferencing. One student reads his/her work to the other as both follow the written copy. Questions to consider for conferencing include the following:

1. Is there any idea in the story that does not seem to fit?
2. Are there settings you can describe more specifically?
3. Should you add more specific descriptions of the characters?
4. Try reading the story again and put a dot on the page wherever more information needs to be added.
5. Have you shown rather than told? Example: Show the character being obnoxious around others rather than say, "John is obnoxious."

Editing:

Each student passes his/her story story to a different student for editing. Briefly review sentence and punctuation errors to consider.

1. Write "S" for sentence errors, allowing 5-7 minutes. Exchange papers.
2. Write "C" to designate capital errors, allowing 5-7 minutes. Exchange papers.
3. Write "Sp" for spelling errors, allowing 5-7 minutes. Exchange papers.
4. Write "P" for punctuation errors, allowing 5-7

minutes. Return the paper to its writer. Students rewrite the draft, making correcting noted during the editing and revision stages.

Publishing:
Students share their short stories in groups of five. The group votes for one story from the group to be read to the entire class. Students turn in the final copies with the earlier draft, showing editing and revision markings.

The varied student reactions were unprecedented. One previously nonchalant student vehemently objected when he discovered his editing peer evaluator had overlooked a comma error. Further, he searched his grammar text to locate the rule proving his peer evaluator, in deed, had missed the error. In another class, the students spontaneously cheered a classmate's product. Then when the bell rang ending the third class before the reader reached the story conclusion, the other students pleaded, "Just skip to the end, hurry!" The last class produced the most captivating response.

"Mrs. Edwards, how did those publishers in New England know our stories were gonna' be so good? How much do we get paid?"

The positive outcomes exceeded those resulting from the comparative essay I previously had teamed with the Hawthorne short stories. I obtained the comparison developed through student discussion. Beyond that, the

students detected, argued, and corrected their own grammatical errors before I read the finished products. As a bonus, the revision process brought new life to my admonitions concerning logical development, tone, style, etc. when the peer evaluator said, "This is all mixed up. What do you mean?" Above all else, the student involvement, spontaneous applause, and demonstrated sense of accomplishment have motivated my students and me to write and to share our written products.